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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 003521

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TAGS: PGOV TW

SUBJECT: SECOND PRESIDENTIAL RECALL FAILS AND THINGS CALM DOWN, FOR NOW

REF: TAIPEI 3494

Classified By: Director Stephen M. Young, Reason(s): 1.4 (B/D).

¶1. (C) Summary: Voting along strict party lines, on October 13 the Legislative Yuan (LY) rejected the second motion to recall President Chen this year. Before the vote, "Depose Chen" protest movement leader Shih Ming-te instructed his followers to go home and rest instead of picketing the LY during the recall vote. In hopes of avoiding protester burnout, protest leaders announced a plan to drastically scale down protest activities, at least until the prosecutor's office releases its Presidential Office investigation report. As punishment for the alleged misconduct of anti-Chen protesters during the October 10 "national day" protests, Interior Minister Lee Yi-yang ordered permission for the "Depose Chen" movement to host a rally from October 14-27 to be revoked. Taipei Mayor Ma Ying-jeou challenged Lee's order, but lost. End Summary.

Presidential Recall Fails

¶2. (U) As expected, the Legislative Yuan (LY) rejected the second motion to recall President Chen, by a 116-1 vote, with 13 "invalid" votes. Before the vote, the KMT and PFP had threatened disciplinary action against party lawmakers who failed to support the recall. Only three Pan-Blue legislators failed to vote. The DPP directed its 85 legislators to boycott the vote, which they did. The twelve members of the TSU, joined by one independent legislator, cast the 13 "invalid" ballots. There were no significant protest activities outside the LY as the legislators cast their ballots because "Depose Chen" movement leader Shih Ming-te had earlier called upon his supporters to go home and rest.

"Depose Chen" Movement Takes a Breather

¶3. (C) "Depose Chen" movement foreign press liaison Emile Sheng told AIT that he and others in the movement leadership had considered protesting outside the LY during the recall vote, but had canceled such plans for fear of "overmobilizing" their supporters, who were tired after more than a month of virtually non-stop protest activities. A protest outside the LY during the recall vote would have had

little impact, Sheng said, and would have only worsened the protesters' exhaustion.

¶14. (C) Sheng and fellow protest organizer and KMT legislator Joanna Lei separately told AIT that many movement supporters are increasingly frustrated by the continued stalemate with President Chen, who has given no sign of considering their demand that he resign from the presidency. There is also a concern that more radical second-tier leaders may try to steer the movement in a more provocative, even violent, direction. Some of these leaders feel they must constantly increase the pressure on President Chen to keep up momentum, and have suggested that "a few sacrifices" may be needed to accomplish this. According to Sheng, Shih has been able to suppress these ideas, but has not pledged to disavow the movement should it lose its peaceful character. Nor has Shih ruled out more confrontational tactics in order to keep these more radical elements in the fold and under his control.

¶15. (U) During an evening press conference on Thursday, October 12, "Depose Chen" movement leaders announced that the movement would await the release of the prosecutor's Presidential Office investigation report before planning any further large-scale protest activities. In the interim, a smaller contingent of Shih Ming-te and a few other movement leaders would continue their vigil at the Taipei Main Train Station, but reduce it from round-the-clock to four hours each evening. Movement leaders voiced disappointment over the Taipei City Police Department's October 12 decision to revoke their permit for a Ketagelan Boulevard demonstration scheduled from October 14 to 27, but said they would not appeal the revocation. (Comment: The revoked permit was a convenient excuse to table protest activities that were

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already losing steam. End Comment.)

Ma Embarrassed by Permit Row

¶16. (U) Over the past two days, Taipei Mayor Ma Ying-jeou locked horns with Interior Minister Lee Yi-yang over the permit issue. The Taipei City government issued the Ketagelan Boulevard permit to the "Depose Chen" movement weeks ago, but on October 12, Interior Minister Lee instructed the National Police Agency to order the Taipei City Police Department to cancel the permit, as punishment for alleged misconduct by anti-Chen protesters during the October 10 "Double Ten" national day. Mayor Ma publicly accused Lee of overstepping his authority, and of failing to understand local "self-governance." Lee countered at a later press conference that the Interior Ministry and National Police Agency were constitutionally charged to preserve public order, and called on Ma to put his duties as Taipei Mayor before the interests of the KMT. For the past month, Ma had directed the Taipei police to approve all applications for anti-Chen protests in the city, and many Pan-Green critics had accused him of putting KMT political advantage before the safety and welfare of Taipei's citizens. The decision by the Taipei police to revoke the permit undercut Ma's mayoral authority and arguably bolstered critics' claims that Ma had put party politics before civic order. But, many Blues don't think Ma has been partisan enough. KMT legislator Lei told AIT that many within the Shih movement don't care that Ma is a sitting mayor, and are bitterly disappointed with his failure to take a bolder leadership role in the anti-Chen movement. As for the rest of Taiwan, an October 11 poll conducted by the China Times suggests public support for Shih's movement is waning: 54 percent of those polled said the "Depose Chen" movement should end, while only 32 percent said it should continue.

Comment

7. (C) With the second recall motion behind them, all sides

are resting and regrouping in advance of the next big fight, which will follow the release of the prosecutor's Presidential Office investigation report. Whether the report implicates Chen or exonerates him, it will generate enough Blue anger to fuel Ma's promised third recall attempt, and Shih Ming-te's "Depose Chen" movement will get the transfusion of indignation it needs to muster one more big protest. But another recall attempt and another big demonstration won't be enough to unseat the president unless his still-solid block of DPP supporters break ranks with him, something unlikely to occur unless Chen is personally implicated in serious wrongdoing.

YOUNG